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NOTES AND SUGGESTIONS

HOW THE MIDDLE AGES GOT THEIR NAME

IN my study "Anent the Middle Ages" (AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW, XVIII. 710-726, 1913) I pointed out that the oft-made ascription of the idea of a Middle Age to the Italian Humanists lacked as yet demonstration, and that the earliest use of that term thus far discovered by the students of historical periodization carries us back only to the German text-book writer Cellarius (Keller) in 1685, or at farthest to a sporadic utterance of the Liège scholar Rausin in 1639. But in the last months a more systematic research has brought notable revision of this result. Professor Paul Lehmann of Munich, assuming the editorship of the *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters* founded by Ludwig Traube, opens the first issue (1914) of its new fifth volume with an historical sketch "Vom Mittelalter und von der Lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters". In this study (brought to my attention by my colleague Hamilton) he shows the phrase *medium aevum* in use by the German jurist-historian Goldast as early as 1604, while the synonymous phrase *media aetas* was used almost a century earlier (1518) by the Swiss scholar Vadian (Joachim von Watt), whose Basel neighbors Beatus Rhenanus and the publisher Heerwagen were at about the same time expressing the same idea by *media antiquitas* and *media tempora*. Nay, this last locution or one close akin to it, *media tempestas*, Lehmann has detected a half-century earlier, in 1469, and indeed in the mouth of an Italian Humanist. In the edition of Apuleius brought out that year at Rome is a letter of Giovanni Andrea (de' Bossi?), bishop of Aleria and later librarian of the Vatican, who, paying a warm tribute to his German friend Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (d. 1464), declares him to have been familiar with all histories, not only the ancient, "sed mediae tempestatis tum veteres tum recentiores usque ad nostra tempora". The "to our times" suggests that to the bishop his *media tempestas* meant the whole period intervening since the ancients and had no hither terminus; but his distinction between "the older" and "the more recent" betrays his consciousness of a transition, and his equivocal phrase, borrowed by later notices of Nicholas, as by Hartmann Schedel in the Nuremberg Chronicle (1493) and by Lefèvre of Étapes in his standard edition (1514)

of the works of the Cusan, may not impossibly be the parent of the later use. But it is clear from the variants that we have to do with the history of an idea, not of a phrase; and even Lehmann's careful research makes no claim to exhaustiveness.

To the English-speaking student it is of interest to note that our use of a plural finds an early precedent in *media tempora*, and that so early as 1611 (Lehmann says 1612, but the edition of 1612 was a reprint) the learned Bodleian librarian, Thomas James, in his *Treatise of the Corruption of Scripture*, was using the adjective "middle aged". Already Vadian had coined the German *mittel-jährig*.

GEORGE L. BURR.